

Try not to say, “no comment.” If you can't answer a question, explain clearly why you can't. Don't be afraid to tell the reporter that you don't know the answer.

Don't lose your cool. If you do, you are likely to hurt yourself. Try to confine your answers to the reporter's questions. Don't ramble. Long silences are a clever interviewer's trick to keep his or her subject talking. Keep your composure, no matter how difficult that may seem.

Don't raise a ruckus if you feel you have been misquoted. The most appropriate place to go if this happens is to the reporter. Go to him or her calmly and explain the situation. If you are not satisfied and the issue is important, you may go to the editor and ask him or her to speak with the reporter and get back to you. Treat the reporter and the editor as you would a customer or business associate – with courtesy, not antagonism.

Television Interviews



Don't worry about looking or sounding like Diane Sawyer or Dan Rather. Just be yourself. The important thing is that you be and appear honest, straightforward and concerned.

Imagine that your conversation is one-on-one with someone you know and like. Pretend you are explaining your program/issue to your mom, your spouse or a close friend.

Look at the reporter, not the camera.

Be prepared to suggest visuals that may help make the story better. You might suggest meeting the reporter outside your office at a more visually appealing location such as the courthouse steps or across the street from the courthouse.

Radio Interviews

Most radio interviews are conducted over the phone. Make sure that you prepare for the interview by cutting out all distractions. Ask that other calls

be held and shut your door so that phones aren't ringing and people aren't ambling into your office during the interview. Speak in your normal voice, and speak clearly so that you can be understood -- not too fast and not too slow.

Print Interviews

Print interviews usually last longer than radio or television interviews and the reporter usually wants more detail. Make sure you block out enough time for the interview. If you are not the expert on every facet of your program or issue, refer the reporter to the appropriate person. Be sure to give the expert a heads-up that the reporter may be calling.

CHAPTER THREE: MAKING CORRECTIONS

Mistakes happen. Sometimes a reporter does not get the story right. Sometimes a reporter misses a major point. How you handle these issues is very important. You need to contact the right person in the right way, or your future dealings with that reporter and media outlet may be damaged. Never respond in the heat of the moment. An angry response is ineffective. It is always good to get a second opinion.

Most reporters don't make huge factual errors. However, we are close to our programs and often take anything said about them personally. What you perceive as a factual error may not be. That's why you should always contact the public information office before proceeding with a complaint.

Start your discussions with the reporter who was responsible for the story. Don't start by going over his or her head to an editor or a producer. If you don't get satisfaction from the reporter, then you may want to pursue the problem with others in managerial positions.

First, ask yourself these questions:

- Is the problem the headline?
- Is the problem an obvious factual error, like a misspelled name?